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(Political Advertisement)

LIFE'S LIKE THAT

By FRED NEHER



"The only way we'll get rid of her is to make her eat her own cooking!"

124 Cases of Shigella Infection Found in 1962

By K. H. SUTHERLAND, M.D.
County Health Officer

Shigella infection is an intestinal condition that may afflict anyone, though studies of outbreaks show that young children are more vulnerable to the infection than are older persons.

While less common in this country than in some others, national statistics reveal that this highly communicable disease causes more deaths annually than typhoid fever.

Thus far in 1962, some 124 cases of the disease have occurred in Los Angeles County, and this reckoning is probably incomplete since the infection is sometimes so slight that medical attention is not obtained.

THE DISEASE, which is also called shigellosis and bacillary or bacterial dysentery, is sometimes referred to as a "filth disease" since the infective organisms are transmitted from the feces of a person who has the disease to other individuals by way of food, flies, or dirty hands. Articles may also be a means of spreading the disease, if touched by hands or by flies that carry the dysentery bacilli.

Symptoms of illness become apparent in from one to seven days after the disease organisms gain entry into the body, most often on the third or fourth day. Typically, they consist of headache, chills and fever, nausea and vomiting, explosive diarrhea, and a colicky griping pain in the abdomen.

IN MORE severe cases blood and mucous may be present in the stools, and damage to the body is primarily due to the rapid loss of fluids. Prostration in these cases is not unusual. When infants or debilitated elderly persons are involved, the illness may be fatal.

Cases of shigellosis occur that are asymptomatic, however, which means that no signs of illness are apparent even though the individual harbors the disease organisms

and may transmit them to others.

THE AFFECTED individual remains infectious to others until the disease organisms are no longer found in the stools. This is usually within a few weeks from the beginning of illness.

Some strains of the shigella organisms are more resistant than others and the individual may harbor these disease agents for a year or two, but rarely longer. Such persons may therefore be a source of infection as they are carriers of the dysentery bacilli. When such carriers are known or discovered, they are kept under surveillance by public health officials until no longer infectious. Nor are they permitted to work around food until official permission is received.

Owing to the ease of spread, particularly in institutions, and the potential seriousness of the disorder, all cases of shigella infection are reportable by law to health officials. Investigation of existing sanitary conditions and personal habits are started at once, and the conditions responsible for the spread of the infection are eliminated as soon as possible.

THERE IS NO easy or specific cure for dysentery. In severe cases hospitalization is necessary, and this is particularly true in the case of infants and young children whose rapid loss of bodily fluids quickly creates a medical emergency. The earlier a physician is consulted in these cases, the better it is for the patient. Some cases recover in a short time, others take two or three weeks.

The best way to avoid this disease is to practice scrupulous personal and environmental cleanliness. The disease organisms are largely transmitted by way of dirty hands, and frequent and thorough hand-washing, particularly in those situations where the disease is suspected, will do much to eliminate its spread.

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